

THE PLAIN DEALER

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Sex crimes unit shrinks Rape rate rises as detective staff nearly halved

By JOHN S. LONG
STAFF WRITER

The frequency of rape, child molestation and other sex crimes has risen sharply in Cleveland, coinciding with deep cuts in the strength of the Police Department's sex crimes unit.

While sex crimes are being committed at a rate that would lead to a 20.7% increase over last year's incidence, the sex crimes unit is operating at nearly half of its 1987 peak strength of 15 detectives.

The unit recently shrank to eight detectives when one of its members was reassigned to serve as a chauffeur to Council President George L. Forbes, D-9.

Forbes could not be reached for comment.

While the sex crimes unit has been reduced, some other squads, such as auto theft and narcotics, have been strengthened.

"It's a crime to be making these cuts," said Jennifer Wise, justice system coordinator for the Rape Crisis Center. "This is ridiculous."

"Does Mr. Forbes have recurring nightmares and need years of counseling because he doesn't have a chauffeur? Well, my clients do experience those things."

Wise said she began noticing the effects of the cuts, which began in the summer of 1987, last spring. She said victims began complaining that detectives weren't showing up to take their reports in the one to two days they had been told it would take.

"It began taking four, five, up to seven days, which is a long time for someone who has gone through something like this," Wise said. "The individuals (detectives) who finally do show up are great, some of the best people in the department, but they are stretched thin."

The sex crimes unit, disbanded in the late 1970s, was re-established in

SEE RAPES/17-A

Stock market glow is gone



Wednesday will mark a year since the day stock-market expectations came down to earth for millions of Americans. Losses on the street of broken dreams were estimated at about half a trillion dollars.

Black Monday, Oct. 19, 1987, passed even the historic crash of Black Tuesday, Oct. 29, 1929. The market's crash was its worst fall since 1914.

When the day ended, the Dow Jones average of 30 industrial stocks, which many consider a gauge of the health of capitalism, was down 508 points, a decline never before seen.

That was a year ago. What has happened since then?

People are still going to work, buying homes, taking vacations. But they are doing all this more cautiously than a year ago. Some of the glow is gone.

People are holding more of their money close, putting more into insured savings, watching the market with a more cynical eye. Many are still in stocks, investing in mutual funds, expecting a return to pre-crash prosperity but are doing so much more cautiously.

Could it happen again?

For an analysis of Wall Street, then and now, turn to Page 1-E.

Abducted children returned

Car stolen as kids sat in back seat

By DELL M. MOSLEY
STAFF WRITER

A Cleveland woman who watched in horror as her young daughter and nephew were abducted from an East Side gas station before dawn yesterday was reunited with them by noon.

But Birdie Plummer said she lived a nightmare for eight hours, and learned a valuable lesson: Never leave the keys in the car at a gas station.

Plummer's job with the Cleveland police scientific investigations unit means she rubs shoulders with crime every working day.

But nothing could prepare her for the sight of a strange man driving away in her 1980 Pontiac in the dark with her daughter, Laquita, 5, and nephew, Demetrius, 7, in the back seat.

It had started out as a routine journey home for Plummer and the children, who had just left Plummer's sister-in-law's house in Garfield Heights.

The gas gauge was on empty, so she pulled over at a gas station at E. 131st St. and Harvard Ave.

Before filling her tank, she went to pay the attendant. Returning less than a minute later, she saw a man hunched over the wheel driving her car away.

While the rest of the family kept vigil in her Cliffview Rd. apartment, Plummer spent the next eight hours praying and riding with police searching for the car.

Police broadcast a description of the children and car every 15 minutes, but it was an alert resident who cracked the case.

The children were found unharmed at noon in front of a home in the 11200 block of Dove Ave., after a woman spotted them moving around in the car by themselves and called the police. She said the car had been parked there since about 4:30 a.m.

Demetrius said the man didn't talk much. "He parked the car and we had to stay in. He cracked the window so we could get a little air," he said.

Demetrius said he and Laquita were not afraid as the stranger drove them around, and they

SEE CHILDREN/4-A



Demetrius Plummer, 7, on bike, is hugged by his mother, Brenda Plummer, while Laquita Plummer, 5, is held by her mother, Birdie Plummer. The children were reunited with their mothers yesterday afternoon after a stranger abducted them eight hours earlier from an East Side gas station.

Metzenbaum way ahead, PD poll says

Voinovich losing by 26 points

By STEVE LUTTNER
POLITICS WRITER

Mayor George V. Voinovich is being pummeled in every region of Ohio by Sen. Howard M. Metzenbaum, who has a statewide lead of 26 percentage points over his Republican challenger, according to a Plain Dealer poll.

The poll also shows that Voinovich created a large negative reaction — even from Republicans — from his attempt last month to portray Metzenbaum as being soft on child pornography.

The telephone poll, involving 600 randomly selected registered voters in the state, was conducted Tuesday and Wednesday and found Metzenbaum leading Voinovich statewide by 56%-30%. After more than two years of campaigning for the seat that Metzenbaum has held since 1976, the poll offers a sobering testament to the failure of the Voinovich campaign to make sufficient gains against Metzenbaum.

With less than a month remaining until the Nov. 8 election, the poll shows Voinovich lagging behind Metzenbaum — often by considerable numbers — in almost every category.

In response to the question: "The

■ The Plain Dealer makes its endorsement for the Senate race between Mayor George V. Voinovich and Sen. Howard M. Metzenbaum. Page 4-C.

candidates for the U.S. Senate are Republican George Voinovich and Democrat Howard Metzenbaum. If the general election for the Senate were being held today, for whom would you vote?" Metzenbaum scored well in every part of the state.

In the southwest, which includes fertile Republican territory in Cincinnati and Columbus, Metzenbaum was ahead of Voinovich 49%-35%, with 16% of the voters undecided or declining to respond.

In the northwest, which includes some of the most Republican counties in the state as well as traditionally Democratic Lucas County (Toledo), Metzenbaum led 54%-29%, with 17% undecided or declining to respond. In the rural southeast, where Metzenbaum has done well in his previous Senate elections, the incumbent leads Voinovich 59%-24%, with 17% undecided or declining to respond. And in the

SEE POLL/4-A

Contented voters in California ask, 'Why change?'

By TOM DIEMER
STAFF WRITER

MODESTO, Calif. — Painted on an archway over the main drag in this dusty, overgrown farm town are the words: "Water, Wealth, Contentment, Health."

It's just a chamber of commerce slogan, yet it reflects the kind of thinking that may be the biggest obstacle to Democrat Michael S. Dukakis' bid to capture California's 47 electoral votes — the biggest prize in the election.

"I think the last eight years — compared to what preceded them — have been very good," said Patrick Gallagher, a Modesto machinist. "The less change actually, the better."

So important is California, that Modesto was Dukakis' second campaign stop after his triumphant acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta last July.

Polls show the battle of California is nearly even with three weeks remaining. But interviews with voters last week found little enthusiasm for either candidate and an absence of any groundswell for a change in the political climate.

Run for the White House



■ In the first PD poll sample to include any post-debate interviews, the Bush/Quayle ticket maintains its 8-percentage-point lead over Dukakis/Bentsen. Page 2-A.

■ The cavalry has been summoned to rescue Michael S. Dukakis from the mess of his Ohio campaign. Page 20-A.

■ Rep. Dennis Eckart turns the Democratic response to the president's radio address into a campaign speech for Michael S. Dukakis. Page 21-A.

Vice President George Bush's "read my lips" promises not to raise taxes and to keep the Reagan-era economic expansion going may make him a safer bet than Dukakis for the contented Californians — and there are many of them.

SEE CALIFORNIA/2-A

Heated battles chill classrooms

Politics kept Cleveland school board from making repairs

By JOHN F. HAGAN
and RONALD RUTTI
STAFF WRITERS

Cleveland school children arriving for classes in three elementary schools earlier this month had a rude awakening. Their schools had no heat, and cool October temperatures sent a chill through the classrooms and halls.

By last Tuesday, instead of taking their now-familiar seats in the classrooms they were assigned at

ANALYSIS

the beginning of the school year, the children were placed on buses and taken to other schools where working boilers piped heat into the classrooms.

Cleveland's school system had failed its children once again. Contributing to the boiler fiasco were a plodding bureaucracy, board politics, board-superintendent conflicts and the district's tendency this year to focus on the immediate crisis rather than on general district activities.

And once more the school system has intensified the shine of the spotlight on its failings rather than on its achievements.

For 10 years the Cleveland school system has known that it had to replace aging, coal-fired boilers that remained in some schools with less polluting heating systems. The district and the city of Cleveland in 1979 reached an agreement that Cleveland schools

would systematically replace the boilers.

Replacement at the last three schools — Moses Cleveland, Mount Auburn and Almira elementary schools — was to be included in an overall capital improvement plan put together by a committee formed by Superintendent Alfred D. Tutela, using money made available by voters in August 1987.

The committee and Tutela recommended to the board that an architectural firm and construction

SEE REPAIRS/6-A

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